

Week Ending Friday, February 18, 2000

Statement on Action in the Northern Ireland Peace Process

February 11, 2000

The Good Friday accord, made possible by the courage of leaders from both of Northern Ireland's communities, responded to the people's overwhelming desire for peace. It has been sustained by those leaders making the tough decisions necessary to keep the process moving forward. I regret that the IRA did not give the de Chastelain Commission a more timely commitment on arms decommissioning to maintain the momentum toward full implementation of the accord—a commitment which reflects the wishes of the vast majority of people both in Ireland and in Northern Ireland.

At the same time, we have seen real progress in the past few days. This progress is reflected in the most recent report from the de Chastelain Commission, which states that the commitment made by the IRA's representative "holds out the real prospect of an agreement which would enable [the Commission] to fulfill the substance of its mandate." I urge all the parties to build on that progress, remain engaged, and carry through on their responsibilities to work together to achieve the full implementation of the Good Friday accord.

NOTE: This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

Proclamation 7272—National Consumer Protection Week, 2000

February 11, 2000

*By the President of the United States
of America*

A Proclamation

Americans have long enjoyed shopping from the comfort of their homes. Door-to-door sales and mail-order catalogs have given

consumers the opportunity to choose from a wide variety of products while saving precious time for family and personal interests. As we move into the digital age, the Internet and other information technologies have made electronic commerce possible, and on-line shopping is opening doors for consumers, established retailers, and small entrepreneurs across the Nation. With these opportunities, however, come certain risks for home shoppers. Advances in telecommunications and marketing technology bring new opportunities for unfair, deceptive, or fraudulent practices that target consumers where they live. It is now easier than ever for perpetrators of fraud to reach shoppers in their homes; consequently, it is more important than ever that consumers know their rights, understand the risks, and know to whom they can turn for recourse.

While there are risks to home shopping, including unwanted solicitations, ill-advised purchases, and failure to deliver items purchased, consumers can protect themselves against these dangers by taking basic, commonsense precautions. Home shoppers should ascertain the seller's location and reputation; give out personal information only if they know who is collecting it, why it is being collected, and how it will be used; and report problems that they cannot resolve with the vendor.

In order to protect consumers, the Federal Trade Commission, the Department of Justice, the Consumer Federation of America, the American Association of Retired Persons, the National Association of Consumer Agency Administrators, and the National Association of Attorneys General have joined forces to inform Americans about their rights as home shoppers, about merchant responsibilities, and about how to enjoy safely the benefits of shopping from home. This information is available in writing, by telephone, and online, helping to educate consumers about

such issues as how to stop unwanted telemarketing or mail-order solicitations and when to provide private information to an on-line business.

I encourage all Americans to take advantage of this opportunity to learn more about safe shopping from home. By becoming wise and well-informed consumers, we can reduce the incidence of fraud and deception in the marketplace.

Now, Therefore, I, William J. Clinton, President of the United States of America, by virtue of the authority vested in me by the Constitution and the laws of the United States, do hereby proclaim February 14 through February 20, 2000, as National Consumer Protection Week. I call upon government officials, industry leaders, consumer advocates, and the American people to participate in programs promoting safe and reliable shopping from home and to raise public awareness about the dangers of deceptive and fraudulent practices targeting home shoppers.

In Witness Whereof, I have hereunto set my hand this eleventh day of February, in the year of our Lord two thousand, and of the Independence of the United States of America the two hundred and twenty-fourth.

William J. Clinton

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NOTE: This proclamation was published in the *Federal Register* on February 16. This item was not received in time for publication in the appropriate issue.

The President's Radio Address

February 12, 2000

Good morning. Today I want to speak with you about the important steps we're taking to reach one of our Nation's highest goals, helping all our people to succeed at work and in the most important work of all: caring for their children.

For 7 years now, this administration has taken action to give families more of the tools they need to balance the difficult demands of work and home. We've helped to make child care better, safer, and more affordable

for millions of families. We've greatly expanded preschool and after-school programs. We've fought to give generous tax credits to help the growing numbers of families who provide care for aging or ailing loved ones at home.

This month we're celebrating the seventh anniversary of the Family and Medical Leave Act, the very first bill I was privileged to sign as President. That bill was the product of years of hard work by a large coalition of caring leaders, many of whom have joined me here today. They should be very proud of their efforts.

The family and medical leave law has now given more than 20 million Americans the opportunity to take up to 12 weeks of unpaid leave to care for a newborn child or a sick relative or attend to their own serious health needs—without fear of losing their jobs. Everywhere I go, people come up to me and tell me how much this law has meant to their lives. I've heard people say that the time they were able to take off to be by their dad's side in the hospital or bond with a new daughter at home was the most important time they've ever spent.

Not only has the law been a godsend for families, it's also been good for business. Nearly 85 percent of businesses reported that complying with the law required no extra cost. In fact, in many cases it has actually helped save them money by cutting down on turnover and reducing the expense of training new workers.

But for all the success of this law, we know we can and should do more. Today, there are still large numbers of families who need to take leave from work but can't afford to give up the income. That's why, 3 months ago, Labor Secretary Alexis Herman and I proposed a new rule to give States flexibility to use their existing unemployment insurance programs to offer paid leave to new parents. Participation is purely voluntary, but we hope States will take advantage of this. Before they do, they must determine how it will affect the soundness of their unemployment system.

Today I am pleased to announce a new way we can make it easier for States to take up this challenge. I'm proposing \$20 million in new competitive grants to help develop